

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, BG

SUBJECT: RESISTANCE DAY: JSD CHALLENGES THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY: AFTER MONTHS OF PUBLIC INACTIVITY, THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY (JSD) HAS ANNOUNCED A NATIONWIDE RESISTANCE DAY JANUARY 20 TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN OF AGITATION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. MARKED BY PROCESSIONS AND MASS PUBLIC RALLIES, RESISTANCE DAY IN DACCA WILL COINCIDE WITH THE WINTER SESSION OF PARLIAMENT AND THE SECOND ANNUAL AWAMI LEAGUE CONFERENCE. THUS VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE WILL BE IN DACCA AS WELL AS ANTICIPATED FOREIGN DELEGATIONS INVITED TO OBSERVE THE PARTY MEETING. THE AWAMI LEAGUE HAS SCHEDULED A COUNTER MASS RALLY FOR THE 20TH FOR THE SAME PLACE AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME. ALTHOUGH THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENT CONFLICT BETWEEN THE OPPOSING CADRES AND THE GENERAL MOOD IN BANGLADESH, PARTICULARLY IN DACCA, IS ONE OF DISILLUSION AND FRUSTRATION, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT NEITHER THE SHEIKH NOR THE MSD LEADERSHIP WANTS MAJOR TROUBLE ON THE 20TH. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE COURSE OF SPONTANEOUS OUTBREAKS, IT IS OUR VIEW AT PRESENT THAT SECURITY FORCES WILL LIKELY BE ABLE TO CONTAIN CLASHES BETWEEN THE CADRES, AND THAT MASSIVE DISTURBANCES WILL NOT RESULT. END SUMMARY.

1. DECEMBER 31 AT THE LARGEST MASS RALLY SEEN IN DACCA IN NEARLY A YEAR, JSD LEADERS JALIL AND RAB CALLED FOR A PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE

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DAY OF RALLIES AND PROCESSIONS JANUARY 20 AS THE FORERUNNER TO A MASS MOVEMENT OF DEMONSTRATIONS, STRIKES, AND GHERAOS (LOCK-INS) AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. IN STRIDENT, THREATENING LANGUAGE, THE JSD LEADERS CONDEMNED THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S CORRUPTION; MUJIB'S SECURITY

FORCE, THE RAKKHI BAHINI; INDIA'S DOMINATION; AND THE NEO-IMPERIALISM OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE U.S. THE AWAMI LEAGUE, WHICH WILL BE ENDING ITS THREE-DAY NATIONAL PARTY CONFERENCE JANUARY 20, THEN ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD ALSO HOLD A MASS RALLY THAT DAY. BOTH PARTIES WANT TO USE THE PALTAN MAIDAN NEXT TO Dacca STADIUM AND HAVE SET THE STARTING TIMES WITHIN TWO HOURS OF EACH OTHER. JAN 9 IN A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED TO PROTEST THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S SCHEDULEING OF A CONFLICTING RALLY, RAB AND JALIL AGAIN VOWED THAT THEY WOULD GO FORWARD WITH THEIR PROGRAM AND WARNED THAT IF IT COULD NOT USE THE PALTAN MAIDAN, JSD WOULD "GHERAO" THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE AND HOLD THE RALLY THERE. IF THE PROGRAM FOR THE 20TH WAS HINDERED IN ANY WAY, JSD WOULD LEAD A PEOPLE'S MARCH OF ONE MILLION ON THE CITY.

2. JSD HAS CHALLENGED THE GOVERNMENT IN UNMISTAKABLE TERMS. THE AWAMI LEAGUE, AND THUS MOST ASSUREDLY MUJIB, HAS CHOSEN TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE, INITIALLY BY PREEMPTING THE PALTAN MAIDAN. ANY CHANCES FOR ACCOMMODATION OF BOTH RALLIES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THE JSD'S ADAMANT DEMAND THAT ITS PROGRAM TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. CIRCUMSTANCES MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR EITHER SIDE TO BACK DOWN: JSD'S CREDIBILITY WILL SUFFER CONSIDERABLY IF THIS OPENING GUN IN ITS FIRST REAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, FOR WHICH IT HAS BEEN QUIETLY ORGANIZING, IS ALLOWED TO FIZZLE. BY CHOOSING TO MAKE JANUARY 20 A DAY OF PROCESSIONS AND RALLIES ONLY, JSD LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE HOPED TO AVOID HINDRANCE BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT TO BE EFFECTIVE SUCH A PROGRAM MUST TURN OUT LARGE NUMBERS IN HIGHLY VISIBLE LOCATIONS. FOR ITS PART, MUJIB'S PARTY CANNOT AFFORD TO LET JSD BE TOO SUCCESSFUL JANUARY 20, ESPECIALLY IN Dacca WHERE NOT ONLY ITS OWN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WILL BE GATHERED BUT ALSO VARIOUS FOREIGN DELEGATIONS INVITED TO ATTEND THE PARTY CONFERENCE.

3. EVEN WITHOUT THE DISPUTE OVER THE RALLY SITE, CONFRONTATION IS QUITE POSSIBLE. HOWEVER MUCH THE LEADERSHIP OF BOTH PARTIES MAY WISH TO AVOID VIOLENCE, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THEY HAVE THE PARTY DISCIPLINE TO ENSURE THAT THE THOUSANDS OF PARTY CADRE AND AFFILIATED STUDENTS, WORKERS, AND POSSIBLY SLUM DWELLERS ENLIYTED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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SWELL THE RANKS WILL RESIST THE RESORT TO VIOLENCE IN A TENSE SITUATION. NOR CAN THE POSSIBILITY BE RULED OUT THAT LEFT EXTREMISTS WILL NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO CAUSE TROUBLE.

4. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL FACTORS WHICH SHOULD MITIGATE SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE. ALTHOUGH THE JSD DREW A LARGE CROWD ON DECEMBER 31, LARGELY OF SYMPATHETIC LISTENERS NOT ACTIVE SUPPORTERS, IT DOES NOT HAVE A STRONG POPULAR FOLLOWING. JSD ARTICULATES CONVINCINGLY THE MANY COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE REGIME AND THE AWAMI LEAGUE, BUT IT IS NOT SEEN AS A REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE

PRESENT GOVERNMENT. THUS IT IS UNLIKELY THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF THE

DISAFFECTED POPULACE WILL RISK DANGER IN SCQPORT OF THE JSD; HENCE THE POSSIBILITY OF SPORADIC CLASHES SPREADING IS REDUCED. MOREOVER, BECAUSE JANUARY 20 IS A SUNDAY, MOST OF THE CITIZENRY WILL LIKELY STAY OFF THE STREETS. STILL DEEPLY SCARRED BY THE EVENTS OF 1971, FEW WISH TO BE CAUGHT UP IN NEW VIOLENCE. A SECOND FACTOR IS THAT JSD IS STILL A FLEDGLING PARTY THAT HAS STEPPED UP ITS ORGANIZING IN THE LAST FEW MONTHXABUT WHICH IS STILL UNTESTED AS A EFFECTIVE, WELL ORGANIZED MASS POLITICAL PARTY CAPABLE OF BRINGING OFF NOT ONLY RESISTANCE DAY BUT THE PROTEST CAMPAIGN TO FOLLOW. IT IS IN NO POSITION TO SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE THE REGIME AT THIS TIME. ON THIS ITS FIRST SERIOUS VENTURE, JSD LEADERSHIP, DESPITE THE MIL-ITANT RHETORIC, MAY CAUTIOUSLY AVOID PUTTING ITS TROOPS TO THE TEST IN A TOTAL CONFRONTATION. IT IS NOT CLEAR, EVEN, THAT THE JSD, IN THE SHORT RUN, WISHES TO BRING DOWN MUJIB'S GOVERNMENT; INITIALLY IT MAY BE SATISFIED IN FORCING A SHAKE-UP THAT WILL BRING THE

GOVERNMENT MORE IN LINE WITH ITS OWN WISHES. IF IT CONTRIBUTES TO WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE, IT WILL BRING ONLY REPRESSION INSTEAD. ON THE

AWAMI LEAGUE SIDE, MUJIB HAS GIVEN STRICT ORDERS TO HIS PEOPLE THAT HE WANTS NO TROUBLE JANUARY 18-20; IFSFECESSARY, REPRISAL WILL COME LATER.

5. CONTROL OF ISOLATED AND LOW-LEVEL VIOLENCE IN DACCA SHOULD BE WITHIN THE CAPABILITY OF THE POLICE AND RAKKHI BAHINI. IF VIOLENCE SHOULD SPREAD, HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT COULD CALL IN THE REGULAR ARMY, WHICH IS PRESENT IN BRIGADE-PLUS STRENGTH IN THE DACCA AREA, WE UNDERSTAND, AND IS BEING REINFORCED FROM THE DISTRICT CANTONMENTS. WHILE THE ARMY DOES NOT LIKE TO ASSUME POLICE RESPONSIBILI-
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TIES, WE ESTIMATE THAT IT WOULD PERFORM IN A DISCIPLINED FASHION.
FULLER

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